

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Outlook

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Bethel for salmon fishermen in the Kuskokwim River Drainage.

Chinook Salmon Forecast

The 2016 Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon forecast is for a range of 125,000–219,000 fish. The drainage-wide Chinook salmon escapement goal is 65,000–120,000. Average subsistence Chinook salmon harvest is 84,000. If the run comes back within the forecast range, then there may be enough Chinook salmon to provide for escapement and subsistence needs.

Kuskokwim River Management Strategy

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), who has delegated authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB), are collaborating on a management strategy for the 2016 season. It is the intent of both agencies to provide more directed Chinook salmon subsistence harvest opportunity than in recent years. Given the uncertainty in the estimate of the 2015 run size, the large forecast range of the 2016 run, and consecutive years of low Chinook salmon runs to the Kuskokwim River, a precautionary management strategy remains warranted.

To allow for a precautionary management approach, conservation measures under consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Early season Chinook salmon subsistence fishery closure;
- Tributary closures;
- Gillnet mesh size and length restrictions;
- Live release of Chinook salmon from dip nets, fish wheels, seines etc.;
- Time and area restrictions and;
- Subsistence hook and line bag and possession limits.

In collaboration with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (KRSMWG) and the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fisheries Commission (KRITFC), a finalized set of conservation measures for the 2016 Chinook salmon season will be developed. As additional information useful for assessing run strength becomes available in-season, ADF&G and USFWS will work closely with the KRSMWG and KRITFC to determine if and when early season conservation measures could be relaxed or rescinded.

For additional information concerning this news release:

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